INAUGURAL ISSUE: The North Korea Denuclearization Digest, October 3, 2018

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Pompeo to Pyongyang Following UN Confab

After a long pause in U.S.-North Korea talks on denuclearization and peace, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will travel to Japan, China, North Korea, and South Korea Oct. 6-8. He will visit Pyongyang Oct. 7 and is expected to meet with Chairman Kim Jong-un.

Pompeo’s trip could potentially jump-start action-for-action steps designed to advance the objectives agreed to by President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim at their Summit in Singapore -- and possibly pave the way for a second summit later this year.

The meeting in Pyongyang follows a busy round of multilateral and bilateral discussions on North Korea at last week’s opening session of the 73rd UN General Assembly. U.S. President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in both touted progress in negotiations with North Korea during their addresses to the General Assembly, but North Korea’s foreign minister called out the Trump administration’s focus on sanctions enforcement as “lethal” and an impediment to his country’s nuclear disarmament.

According to an interview with South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha published Wednesday in The Washington Post, South Korea wants the United States to hold off, for now, on a demand for an inventory of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and accept the verified decommissioning of a North Korean major nuclear complex at Yongbyon as a next step in the negotiations. “In exchange for the verified dismantlement of the Yongbyon nuclear facility, the United States would declare an end to the Korean War, a key demand of Pyongyang that U.S. officials have been reluctant to make absent a major concession by North Korea,” the Post reports.

Trump, speaking at the General Assembly Sept. 25, characterized his June encounter with Kim as “highly productive” and noted that both sides agreed that denuclearization is in both countries interest. Trump said while “encouraging measures were taken” since the Singapore summit, “much work is yet to be done.”

At a news conference the following day, Trump emphasized his good relationship with Kim and pushed back against critics claiming that the denuclearization process is at a stalemate. Trump said work is being done behind the scenes, and that he did not want to put a timeline on denuclearization.

In his Sept. 26 UN address, Moon praised Trump for his leadership and highlighted the successes for the inter-Korean process to date. He noted that at the most recent meeting between the two leaders in Pyongyang Sept. 19, Kim committed to “permanently dismantle the missile engine test site and launch platform” under international observation “in order to expedite progress in denuclearization (see below for more details).

Moon said that ending the Korean War is “an urgent task” and looked forward to seeing “bold measures for denuclearization implemented among the related countries, leading to the declaration to end the War.” North Korea has made similar calls for a declaration as necessary for strengthening peace and security on the peninsula and denuclearization and the United States has signaled its willingness to discuss the topic at the next meeting between Trump and Kim.

North Korea’s Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho addressed the UN Sept. 29, and said that the recent deadlock in talks between the United States and North Korea is “because the U.S. relies on coercive measures which are lethal to trust-building.” He listed a number of steps that North Korea has taken, including halting nuclear and missile tests, but said Pyongyang is waiting to see a “corresponding
response from the United States.” Ri denounced the Trump administration’s plan of “denuclearization first” and said that without trust, his country will not disarm.

Pompeo met briefly with Ri Sept. 26. Few details about the meeting were provided, but the State Department confirmed shortly afterward that Pompeo will travel to Pyongyang to discuss the implementation of the Singapore summit document and a second summit between Trump and Kim.

Steve Biegun, the new special envoy for North Korea, will likely accompany him. The two were set to travel to North Korea in early September, but Trump canceled the trip citing a lack of progress. Biegun did visit Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo in mid-September and while in Seoul he met with Moon, who urged him to play a “constructive role” in negotiations. —ALICIA SANDERS-ZAKRE, research assistant and KELSEY DAVENPORT, director for nonproliferation policy

United States Spars with Russia, China on Sanctions

At a UN Security Council meeting dedicated to North Korea Sept. 27, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called for vigorous enforcement of all UN Security Council sanctions “without fail until we realize the fully, final, verified denuclearization” of North Korea. Pompeo, who chaired the session, credited the “historic international pressure campaign” with pushing Kim to the negotiating table, but said more needed to be done to cut off funds “that go directly” to North Korea’s nuclear program.

Pompeo and other members specifically highlighted ship-to-ship transfers of petroleum that are violating the cap set by the Security Council and demanded that these illicit activities cease immediately. While Pompeo did not name any specific countries as involved in the transfers, a leak from a report by the panel of experts set up by the Security Council to assess implementation of UN sanctions contained allegations against China and Russia.

Several other Security Council members echoed Pompeo’s call for sanctions enforcement, but Russia and China argued that the body should consider relaxing some restrictions, given the steps North Korea has taken to date.

Sergey Lavrov, Russia’s foreign minister, argued that steps by North Korea “toward gradual disarmament should be followed by an easing of sanctions.” He also said tightening sanctions by the United States and its allies was inappropriate given the steps North Korea has taken toward denuclearization.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made a similar point, saying the Security Council should consider modifying sanctions in light of North Korea’s actions and “the positive developments” on the peninsula.

South Korea is not a member of the Security Council but was invited to participate in the meeting. South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said Seoul is committed to full implementation of UN sanctions. Although given that sanctions prohibit some of the economic activities Moon has pledged to undertake with North Korea, Seoul may need to request waivers down the road.

More information on North Korea-related Security Council sanctions can be found here.

States Call on North Korea to Sign the CTBT

In a special, high-level meeting of the “Friends of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)” held at UN headquarters Sept. 27, a key group of Foreign Ministers led by Japan’s Taro Kono called on Pyongyang to solidify its voluntary nuclear test moratorium announced in April and by signing and ratifying the treaty. Despite having 167 state parties, the CTBT has yet to enter into force, and North Korea is one of the eight states that must ratify for that to occur.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini also urged North Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT during the Sept. 27 session, arguing it would give “legal effect to the suspension of nuclear tests.” She also noted that the CTBT Organization based in Vienna could lend “relevant technical assistance” to
verifying the closure of North Korea's test site. While Pyongyang invited journalists to observe the
destruction of testing tunnels at Pyunggye-ri, the closure of the site has not been confirmed by
independent technical experts.

For more, see the October issue of Arms Control Today.

Moon and Kim Make Progress in Pyongyang

South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met in Pyongyang Sept.
18-20 in their third summit.

On Sept. 19, the two leaders agreed to the Pyongyang Joint Declaration, which includes agreements
to expand the "cessation of military hostilities" between the two countries, advance economic,
humanitarian and cultural cooperation and exchanges, pursue complete denuclearization on the
Korean Peninsula and for Kim to visit Seoul "at an early date."

In a joint news conference with Moon, Kim stated: “the world is going to see how this divided nation
is going to bring about a new future on its own.”

Specifically, North Korea committed to dismantle the Dongchang-ri missile engine test site and
launch platform under the observation of international experts and to take additional steps, like the
dismantling of the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon, if the United States "takes corresponding measures
in accordance with the spirit of the June 12 US-DPRK Joint Statement."

While following through on these commitments would be a positive step toward denuclearization, it
is important not to overstate the impact on threat reduction. In an interview with Fox News on Sept.
25, Moon claimed that the dismantlement of the Dongchang-ri missile test site would stop North
Korea from being able to threaten the United States with its nuclear and missile arsenal. Even if
North Korea cannot test long-range missiles, its current nuclear and missile arsenal still pose a
considerable threat.
The declaration did not specify what “corresponding measures” North Korea wants the United States to take in return, but both North Korea and South Korea have emphasized that a declaration ending the Korean War would be a positive step toward building peace and security on the peninsula. Reportedly, Trump told Kim in Singapore that he was open to signing such a declaration.

It is also unclear what next steps the United States is looking for North Korea to take on denuclearization. After the Kim-Moon summit, Pompeo said he looked forward to “rapid denuclearization by January 2021,” whereas Trump told reporters Sept. 26 that there is no timeframe for the process.

An agreement on the "implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain," signed by the two countries' defense ministers, was adopted as an annex to the Pyongyang Joint Declaration. The annex includes commitments for North and South Korea to establish no-fly zones along the border, halt military drills close to the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between the two countries and dismantle several guard posts inside the DMZ.

**IAEA Reports Nuclear Activities Continue**

Director General Yukiya Amano stated in opening remarks to the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) Board of Governors Sept. 10 that North Korea’s ongoing nuclear program was cause for “grave concern” and was “deeply regrettable.” He called on North Korea to resolve its outstanding issues with the IAEA.

The IAEA report said the team on North Korea and the Executive Group, both created in August 2017, stand ready to verify North Korea’s nuclear program if there is a political agreement to do so and have intensified monitoring of the country’s nuclear program through satellite imagery.

In the agency’s Aug. 20 report, the IAEA noted that North Korea “has not abandoned its existing nuclear program in a complete, verified or irreversible manner or ceased all related activities,” as required by UN Security Council Resolutions.
The IAEA’s report is consistent with statements from U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee July 25 that North Korea continues to produce fissile material. While North Korea had not committed to cease nuclear activities immediately in any of the recent declarations it signed with the United States or South Korea, continued work on its nuclear program violates its obligations under the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (which North Korea claims it has withdrawn from) and several UN Security Council resolutions.

“The continuing realities of the DPRK’s unlawful nuclear program warrant a firm and unequivocal response from this Board and all member states,” Nicole Shampaine, U.S. Charge d’Affairs, told the IAEA Board of Governors on Sept. 13. “We must make it clear that the DPRK will not achieve the security or the prosperity it seeks until it follows through on its obligations and commitments to denuclearize.”

**Backgrounder: North Korea’s Nuclear Weapons**

There is a high level of uncertainty around the size of North Korea’s nuclear arsenal and its fissile material stockpiles.

Recent estimates of North Korea’s fissile material stocks range from enough for 16-60 nuclear warheads. Former Los Alamos Laboratory Director Siegfried Hecker assessed that by the end of 2017 that North Korea had enough fissile material for 16-32 warheads (about 20-40 kg of plutonium and 250-500 kg of highly enriched uranium). North Korea’s plutonium stockpile is generated by its 5mw reactor at Yongbyon, which has operated intermittently since 1986. North Korea also has a centrifuge facility for uranium enrichment at Yongbyon and likely operates several additional secret uranium enrichment facilities.

Hecker, one of the few experts to have visited North Korea’s nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, also stated in 2016 that North Korea has the capability to produce the fissile material for 6-7 additional nuclear warheads each year. Hans Kristensen and Robert Norris estimated in January 2018 that North Korea possesses enough fissile material to build between 30 and 60 nuclear warheads. The Defense Intelligence Agency also concluded in 2017 that North Korea had the fissile material for up to 60 nuclear warheads, according to a report in *The Washington Post*.

There are fewer estimates of how many warheads North Korea has built with its fissile material stockpile. Kristensen and Norris assess that North Korea could have already assembled 10-20 nuclear warheads. North Korea’s nuclear warhead stockpile is likely primarily composed of single-stage fission weapons with lower yields, ranging from 10-20 kilotons, although Pyongyang has tested more sophisticated warhead designs with yields of up to 200 kilotons.

For more on North Korea’s nuclear arsenal, see the Arms Control Association’s [North Korea Country Profile](https://www.armscontrol.org/region/asia/north-korea).

**What We’re Reading:**

- **“Designing a New Peace and Security System in Korea,”** Georgy Toloraya, *38 North*, Sept. 7, 2018

  Georgy Toloraya argues that a new “security and cooperation” system for a future denuclearized Korean peninsula should be developed through bilateral and multilateral dialogue in four phases.

- **“North Korea’s Other Weapons of Mass Destruction,”** Cristina Varriale, *Arms Control Today*, September 2018

  In order to limit the threat posed by North Korea’s chemical weapons, Varriale recommends that policy-makers work to reduce the risk of conflict on the Korean peninsula and prevent the erosion of the norm against chemical weapons use globally.
• “A Peace Treaty with North Korea?” Congressional Research Service, Apr. 19, 2018

A Congressional Research Service report details the historical approaches to pursue a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula, South Korea’s current approach to a peace treaty and addresses 10 key questions about establishing a Korean peace treaty.

• “Conflict on the Korean Peninsula: Implications for Jobs in the U.S. Agricultural and Automotive Sectors.” The Economist Intelligence Unit, Oct. 1, 2018 (free account required)

The Economist Intelligence Unit investigated the projected economic impact on US agricultural and automotive sectors of a war on the Korean peninsula. A war on the Korean peninsula would “significantly depress U.S. economic performance,” the report finds, pushing real economic GDP growth for 2018 down to 1 percent from the current projection of 2.7 percent.

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